

**An Interest Based Account (Monotropism theory)
explanation of anxiety in Autism & a Demand Avoidance
Phenomenon discussion**

WOODS, Richard

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**An Interest
Based Account (Monotropism theory)
explanation of anxiety in Autism & a
Demand Avoidance Phenomenon
discussion.**

**Richard Woods.
09th of November 2018.**

PERSPECTIVE.

My Bias.

- This presentation meets its proposed profile, but that does not mean much.
- Demand Avoidance Phenomenon (DAP); will be explained more later.
- Sceptical that DAP is an ASD subtype or a syndrome. Significantly more compelling research; primarily biomarker evidence.

IN THE BEGINNING.

Introduction.

- Originally planned to synthesise Monotropism with Global Instability to explain DAP (Beardon 2012; Beardon 2017).
- After reflection, Monotropism explains Global Instability.

IN THE BEGINNING.

Introduction.

- Advancing Dinah Murray's latest work (2018).
- Explore how Monotropism explains anxiety in autism.
- Avoiding the demand of DAP's main discourse.
- Discussion topics.

AN INTEREST BASED ACCOUNT.

Monotropism 101.

- Attention is a scarce resource, there is competition for its use by myriad interests.
- An interest is anything that gains your attention; from sensory stimuli, thoughts to emotions.
- Each person can only process a certain amount of attention resource at any moment.
- Continuum of perceiving attention; One end is Monotropism and the other Polytropism.
- Autistic persons tend to be monotropic.
- Non-autistic persons tend to be polytropic.

AN INTEREST BASED ACCOUNT.

Monotropism 101.

- Attention tunnels are made from attention resource.
- Monotropism is with a single attention tunnel when entire attention resource is used.
- Polytropism is with many attention tunnels that have similarly distributed attention resources.

AN INTEREST BASED ACOUNT.

Single attention tunnel leads to:

- Interests are processed sequentially in order of importance.
- Experiencing intense sensations.
- Binaric black and white thinking.
- External information being occluded from awareness.
- Intensity of our thoughts leave stronger impression on subconscious.
- More difficult to restart attention tunnels.

CONFLICTING INTERESTS.

An Interest Based Account Reading.

- For further reading see (Murray et al 2005):
- https://www.researchgate.net/publication/7879954_Attention_monotropism_and_the_diagnostic_criteria_for_autism
- *The Passionate Mind* (Lawson 2011).
- *Monotropism - An Interest Based Account of Autism* (Murray 2018).

GOING WITH THE FLOW.

Flow States

- An optimal experience that is beneficial to our wellbeing and happiness.
- Experienced when a person is deeply involved in an activity and nothing else seems to matter.
- Flow states can happen in social interaction.
- Provide stability, e.g. an escape from anxiety.
- Such activities that engage with flow states can become a compulsion and addictive.
- Additionally aversive to a chaotic life outside of the person.
- (McDonnell & Milton 2014).

CLUMPING TOGETHER.

Clumping Attention Resource.

- Where the flow of attention resource is halted due to sticking together.
- Can form blockages to prevent attention resource bringing certain information into person's awareness.
- (McDonnell & Milton 2014).

IN THE LOOP.

Biolooping.

- How a person's mental state affects their physical state.
- Vice versa.
- A person thinking they are ill, can make themselves ill.
- Again, vice versa.
- Yoga.
- (Hacking 1999).

DEVELOPMENTAL TRAJECTORY.

Developing Monotropism.

- N = Attention Resource (Murray 2018).
- A = Anxiety.
- F = Flow states. Duration and intensity of a flow state.
- R = Stored N. Depleted by persons using N

DEVELOPMENTAL TRAJECTORY.

Developing Monotropism.

- C = Capacity: N that is available for use after automatic cognitive processing; forming the perception based on sensory inputs and any intrusive thoughts that consume R before it can be used for day-to-day tasks (Murray et al 2005).
- Higher F = Higher N and Lower A.
- Higher F → Higher C.
- Higher F → Higher R.

AN ANXIOUS MOMENT.

Monotropism and anxiety.

- All humans (and animals) need stability.
- Points of interest can be stability points.
- Black/ white thinking style. Either have certainty/ uncertainty on a subject.
- Obscure other thoughts that are linked to the subject of interest; obscure & reduce anxiety.
- Therefore these flow states form fixed points of stability for autistic persons.

AN ANXIOUS MOMENT.

Monotropism and anxiety.

- Autistic persons engage with subjects that interest them.
- Requires significant N to engage with uninteresting matters.
- Explains autistic social communication issues.
- When a person has no N and an attention tunnel is violently disrupted, an autistic person can lose control; go into meltdown/ shutdown/ panic attacks.
- Autistic persons will tend to have higher anxiety levels due to black and white thinking.

REMEMBER, JUST BREATHE.

Monotropism & Anxiety.

- Autistic persons being 1-2% of population and not interested in non-autistic social norms; they have different sources of stability.
- Polytropism easily engages in social interactions; thus forming flow states from it.
- Non-autistic benefiting from lower anxiety and increased R.
- Non-autistic stability also comes from understanding non-autistic social interaction and being able to rely on this consistently.

REMEMBER, JUST BREATHE.

Flow state Example & Implications.

- Autistic person's breakfast routine, allows person to function for rest of the day.
- Autistic person is in a flow state from that routine.
- Benefiting from reduced anxiety and increased N. If it is a flow state present from the routine, it would be a fixed point as explained by Monotropism.
- Regular low levels of R and C over extended time periods can lead to trauma and anxiety.

REMEMBER, JUST BREATHE.

Polytropism & Anxiety.

- Non-autistic persons can experience inconsistent social interaction.
- *“Some staff also find it anxiety provoking to spend extended periods of time with another person who is anxious and has mood swings. This group of pupils can be very intense to work with, which is tiring”* (Fidler and Christie 2019, p. 140).
- Anxiety here can also be explained by masking (Goffman 1963).

STOP, HAMMER TIME.

Wider Discussion Points.

- How does anxiety interact with tunnels formation?
- How does anxiety interact with tunnels maintenance?
- How does anxiety affect N depletion?
- How does anxiety affect N generation?
- What happens if the interest causes anxiety, particularly in relation to C?

TIME TO PROFILE YOU.

Autism + DAP Traits criteria.

- Continues to resist and avoid ordinary demands of life.
- Demand avoidance can use social strategies.
- Surface sociability, but apparent lack of sense of social identity, pride, or shame.
- Liability of mood & impulsive.
- Obsessive behaviour, often focused on other people.
- Comfortable in role play and pretending (Green et al 2018a; Newson et al 2003).

ASSUMPTIONS?

What Could DAP be?

“Professionals and teams working with children need to become aware of the ways in which girls can mask their difficulties, and need to move away from using the DSM as a “bible”. Stating that someone does not fulfil criteria, when these criteria are based on upon a “male” presentation of a disorder, is short sighted in the extreme” (Eaton 2018, p176).

Such things can be said of using the DAP profile...

ONLY FOOLS AND HORSES?

What Could DAP be?

Medical Ontology.	%
Autism.	N/A.
Autism subtype/ PDD.	N/A.
Autistic Trauma.	N/A.
Female Form of Autism.	N/A.
Form of Attachment Disorder.	N/A.
Form of Catatonia.	12 to 18
Form of Personality Disorder.	N/A.
Heterogeneous Spectrum Condition.	N/A.

ONLY FOOLS AND HORSES?

What Could DAP be?

Medical Ontology.	%
Symptoms of ASD & ADHD.	28 to 44
Symptoms of ASD & Anxiety.	42 to 56
Symptoms of ASD & Anxiety Disorders.	About 40 (children)
Symptoms of ASD & Conduct Disorder.	3.2 (children)
Symptoms of ASD & Depression.	12 to 70
Symptoms of ASD & ODD.	16 to 28
Symptoms of ASD & Schizophrenia.	0 to 6
<i>References are at the end.</i>	

ONLY FOOLS AND HORSES?

A suitable name is?

- As DAP could be any of these & some DAP traits are hard to identify reliably (Garralda 2003).
- *“Dr Gould pointed out that features of PDA can be found in children and young people across the autism spectrum”* (Christie et al 2012, p 187).
- DAP has no specificity (no trait or behaviour is unique to it).

ONLY FOOLS AND HORSES?

A suitable name is?

- For other factors see: Green et al (2018a); Green et al (2018b); Milton (2017); Woods (2017); Woods (2018a); Woods (2018b).
- It is extreme and unethical to favour any one of these ontologies over another; *Demand Avoidance Phenomenon*.

LET'S ROLE PLAY.

Options for discussion.

- 1) DAP criteria.
- 2) Steph's Two Girls quote.
- 3) Judy Eaton observation.
- 4) Fidler and Christie matching the dials concept.

READY PLAYER ONE?

Autism + DAP Traits criteria.

- Continues to resist and avoid ordinary demands of life.
- Demand avoidance can use social strategies.
- Surface sociability, but apparent lack of sense of social identity, pride, or shame.
- Liability of mood & impulsive.
- Obsessive behaviour, often focused on other people.
- Comfortable in role play and pretending (Green et al 2018a).

TAKES TWO TO TANGO.

Steph's Two Girls Example.

“For years now, Sasha has controlled the music in the car, and we have one CD on repeat for weeks or months at a time. From any one CD, there is usually only a handful of songs at most which can be selected; I think I've become immune to the repetition but am sure others would find it unbearable if they joined us regularly on our journey. It's become apparent in the last few days that Sasha now needs to listen to certain songs at a certain time in the journey” (Curtis 2018).

THREE'S A CROWD.

Judy Eaton's Controlling Food Intake.

- Often go into meltdowns etc. when pushed to follow another's direction.
- These persons are externalisers.
- Punished for displaying clear emotions/ making mistakes.
- Internalise their anger & frustration.
- Thus to prevent further social isolation, person control their food intake (behaviour) instead of other persons to manage their anxiety.
- (Eaton 2018, pp. 146-147).

THE FOUR CASE.

Fidler & Christie, Matching The Dials.

- Person has a threshold capacity to demands, determined by their anxiety levels.
- There are 2 dials.
- First for a person's tolerances to demands.
- Second for person's levels of experienced demands.
- If first dial is high, demand and expectations can be raised.
- If first dial is low, demand and expectations should be lowered.
- Synchronise dials as much as possible.
- (Fidler and Christie 2019, pp. 26-27).

ANY QUESTIONS.

The End Game.

- Contact Details:
richardwoodsautism@gmail.com
- Twitter handle:
- @Richard_Autism
- My blog, Rational Demand Avoidance:
<https://rationaldemandavoidance.com/>
- Any questions?

NOT THE ONE BIBLE.

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